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# CDF NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



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## **State Fire Marshal Warning Alternative Heating Sources Can Be Dangerous**

**Sacramento-** As the cost of electrical power goes up, many people are turning to alternative power sources to heat their homes and the results could be deadly. That warning comes today from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) State Fire Marshal, John Tennant. "Products such as space heaters and cooking stoves which use wood, coal, propane or kerosene can cause injury, illness even death if not used properly," warns Tennant. "Every year people are seriously injured with these products and I'm concerned that with the recent energy crisis, we will see many more tragedies."

The CDF State Fire Marshal's Office has the following safety advice for consumers:

### Wood Burning Stoves

- Make certain your stove is installed properly in accordance with the applicable codes and manufacturer's installation instructions.
- Always operate your stove within the manufacturer's recommended temperature limits. Chimney temperature monitors are available and should be used regularly.
- Check the chimney frequently for creosote buildup and have it cleaned when necessary. It is a good idea to have it professionally inspected and cleaned at least once a year.
- Place a sheet of metal underneath the stove to protect the floor surface from live coals and overheating.

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## Kerosene Heaters

- Don't use un-vented kerosene heaters inside a building or vehicle.
- Never use gasoline in kerosene heaters. Use only certified 1-K kerosene, purchased from a reputable dealer.
- When the device is hot, or in operation, never move it, remove the fuel tank, or refuel it.
- Don't fill the fuel tank above the "Full" mark. The space above the full mark is to allow the fuel to expand when the heater is operating. If kerosene is poured into the reservoir to the top; it could later expand, overflow, and/or ignite.
- Don't adjust the wick below the manufacturer's recommended setting. Turning the wick too low can increase the risk of fire and of indoor air pollution.
- Never leave the heater unattended while in operation.

## Gas Space Heaters

- Heaters designed to be vented (look at the back of the heater if you are uncertain), must have venting systems that are properly installed and maintained.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for lighting the pilot light.
- Don't give gas time to accumulate. If you fail to light the heater on the first try, turn it off, and allow time for the gas to dissipate before trying to light it again.
- If there is a strong gas smell, shut off the gas supply to the appliance and open windows and doors. Don't touch any electrical switches, use flashlights, telephones or other possible ignition sources. Call a gas serviceperson from a neighbor's phone.
- Never use a gas cylinder intended for use with a barbecue grill or camper indoors. Excess carbon monoxide gas may be vented into the living space during use. Use only gas cylinders, regulators and connectors, which have been designed for indoor use.

"Carbon Monoxide is colorless, odorless and tasteless," warns Chief Tennant. "It can kill a sleeping person within two hours." Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include headache, dizziness, nausea, and drowsiness and can be confused with flu. Ultimately, brain damage can occur. "The bottom line is, people must be very careful with these products and use them only as they are intended to be used."

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